

October 22, 2001

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW, Room CY-B402
Washington, DC 20554

Re: **CC Docket No.: 01-277**
Application by BellSouth Corporation for Authorization Under Section 271
of the Communications Act to Provide In-Region, Interlata Services in the
States of Georgia and Louisiana

Dear Ms. Salas:

The National Consumers League (NCL) is pleased to support the application of BellSouth for authorization to provide long distance service in Georgia and Louisiana. NCL believes that increased competition in the telecommunications marketplace will benefit consumers and workers in both states. NCL is a private, nonprofit consumer advocacy organization founded in 1899 to identify, protect, represent and advance the economic and social interests of consumers and workers.

NCL has long been committed to its work on telecommunications issues, such as telemarketing fraud, truth-in-billing and fair competition. NCL currently runs the National Fraud Information Center, a toll-free hotline for consumers to get advice about telephone solicitations and report suspected telemarketing fraud. Fraud reports are relayed to a database maintained by the Federal Trade Commission and the National Association of Attorneys General. In addition, Monday through Friday, NCL's fraud center counselors help hundreds of consumers identify the danger signs of telemarketing fraud and avoid becoming victims.

Allowing BellSouth entry into the Georgia and Louisiana marketplace will mean more choices and lower prices for consumers. As we have seen in other states where Bell companies have entered the long distance market (most notably New York), consumers have taken advantage of their increased options and have reaped the benefits, with more pricing plans and lower costs, especially for low volume users. We note that the public utility commissions in both Georgia and Louisiana have determined that BellSouth has met the requirements of the FCC's 14-point checklist as identified by the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

NCL has long been an advocate for fair labor standards. BellSouth is a pro-union company that recognizes labor unions in every current line of business. BellSouth recently ratified agreements with the Communications Workers of America covering approximately 56,000 employees and is committed to providing employees with decent wages, safe working conditions, comprehensive benefits and stable employment.

NCL believes that the entry of BellSouth into the Georgia and Louisiana long distance market should create more jobs in the telecommunications arena in both states. BellSouth's commitment to deploy high-speed network services to Georgia and Louisiana residential customers will also increase the demand for other telecommunications workers. For those of us that support union labor, there is very limited choice in long distance companies. If BellSouth is allowed to provide this service in Georgia, Louisiana and other states, communications workers will have more choice in who they work for as well as provide consumers a choice to purchase service that is provided by union employees. NCL urges the FCC to approve BellSouth's application to provide long distance services in both states.

Sincerely,

LINDA F. GOLODNER
President
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